

Christian Community

A Program Service of the Council for Social Action of the
Congregational Christian Churches, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.,
and the Commission on Christian Social Action of the
Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio

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Social Action Groups At Work

Lakewood Congregational Church, Lakewood, Ohio, believes in keeping social action before what might otherwise become a staid, conventional suburban church. Within the past year Ray Gibbons, Director of CSA, Tom



Public Affairs Committee of the
Lakewood Congregational Church

Keehn, Legislative Secretary, and Francis McPeck, Industrial Relations Secretary, have been called in to preach, to give the "low-down" on Washington, and to take apart Taft-Hartley, respectively.

On Easter Monday, the Public Affairs committee of the church called in representatives of all organizations and departments of the church to discuss the Federal Council of Churches' statement of *Basic Principles and Assumptions* for economic life with Huber Klemme, executive secretary of the Evangelical and Reformed CCSA.

The Reverend George Drew has just become pastor. Mrs. F. P. Brasseur is chairman of the committee.

Negro children will swim in the public park pools of Billings, Montana, on the
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Christian Growth Through Social Action

By RAY GIBBONS

This issue of *Christian Community* is dedicated to the proposition that the greatest unused opportunity for religious education and growth of adults is the program of social action. "Unused" because only one church in ten has a committee or program. "Opportunity" because social action is "learning by doing" genuine social tasks in a cooperative manner; because it is working at the growing edge of society where people learn most rapidly; because it is action in deadly earnest, purposeful and significant; and because teachers and pupils interact in one total, learning process.

What do you mean by "action?" We mean a minimum of reading *about* social action and a maximum of participation in doing a job. Social action is the way in which Christians get done the job that God wants them to do. Befriend the new family which moved into the neighborhood in spite of its color! Find a job and house for a D. P. ("Delayed Pilgrim") family from Europe! Arouse community interest in a slum clearance project! Organize a citizens' group to

support public education in the community! Raise funds for an inter-racial school of week-day religious education! Such is the Divine imperative.

In what sense "Christian?" In the first 1800 years of Christianity the right and obligation of Christianity to teach and guide the whole social order was unquestioned. How a man earned his living and treated his customers, what the children read, and whether or not the parents voted were as much a part of church preaching and member discipline as sin and salvation. Only since the industrial era, the rise of urban centers, the factory wage system, and the secularization of education, labor, politics and press, has Christianity had to defend its concern for the public life. Its defense is obvious. Social justice was the ringing message of the great Old Testament prophets. Jesus not only "fulfilled" the prophets' demand for justice but went beyond it with his standard of love—perfect, forgiving love. By this standard all social orders, including our own, are to be judged. His concern for the physi-

OUR UNITED WITNESS FOR CHRIST

From June 28 to July 1, fifteen hundred delegates from Congregational Christian and from Evangelical and Reformed churches gather at Lakeside, Ohio, in a national conference sponsored by the Christian Education interests of the two denominations. On behalf of the corresponding social action agencies, CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY extends hearty greetings.

The action of the General Council of Congregational Christian Churches in approving the basis of union with interpretations, and the approval by two-thirds of the Evangelical and Reformed synods of the corresponding action of the General Synod, assure us that within a year the union of these bodies will take place. We look forward to a United Church in which the spirit of every congregation and agency will be, in the words of the Lakeside Conference theme, "Our United Witness for Christ."

cal, moral and mental health as exhibited in the works of healing motivates our efforts for human welfare in health, housing, and education. His compassion for the poor, the hungry ("Give ye them to eat") and the weary constrain us to work for adequate family income, social security and programs of rehabilitation. His exemplary treatment of the despised Samaritans and his inversion of common social distinctions impel us to improve relations of the races, classes and social groups. Jesus Christ arouses us to loving action toward our neighbor. "And who is my neighbor?"

Social action is no substitute for faith. It is the first fruit of faith. It is the power and grace of God redeeming us as we fulfill His will for the beloved community. Negatively, it is to build a dike against ideologies and collective passions which threaten the very existence of the Christian community, such as war, depression, and racial persecution. Nothing less than social action fulfills our "Christian" duty today.

What's the set up? In the Evangelical and Reformed Church the Commission on Christian Social Action, ten members elected by the General Synod, operate the program of education and action on a national level. In the Congregational Christian Churches the Council for Social Action, eighteen members elected by the General Council, operate through departments of agriculture, industry, race, international and legislation, in nation-wide affairs. Both work through voluntary synodical and state conference committees. Both encourage, aid and abet the formation of local church committees of social action. Like the local committee of religious education these committees are elected by the local church, make their own program, choose their own materials for study, and cooperate as they please with the national program. Some churches which do not have regular, authorized committees do have persons especially designated for social action responsibilities.

Does it cooperate? The minister, religious educator and Church School superintendent will find the social action

committee eager to provide stimulating program materials for the young people and adults. Recent study lessons such as *Christians and the World of Nations*, by Vernon H. Holloway*, and *Christian Practices*, by Alfred Schmalz, provide stimulating discussion for older classes or young people's meetings. Teachers of children can often use social action materials in the development of Christian understanding and attitudes. Where graded helps are not available, such material may be adapted by the teacher. The women's societies and men's clubs will find the social action committee eager to suggest speakers, subjects for panel discussion, plays, and movies on social issues.

Every group in the church should have at least one program a year and preferably a series of programs on social issues. If any group becomes interested in community delinquency, liquor control, health insurance or migratory labor it will want to call upon the social action committee for specialized help, resource materials, factual studies and possibly leadership suggestions. Either through a joint planning conference or frequent "council" meeting the social action, religious education and organization committees coordinate their plans for the total growth of the church members. For example, one social action committee investigated and reported on the granting of liquor licenses in the neighborhood upon the request of the church trustees. Another conducted a series of church nights, using directed conversation at the tables, "buzz" sessions, socio-drama and town meeting techniques of discussion. When adults resettle a D. P. family in the community, many natural ways will appear to elicit the participation of the young members of the families and church school.

Where does the "social" come in? The most productive action arises from fellowship groups. Study-action groups formed by half a dozen congenial families meeting once a month for recreation and discussion of local issues produce excellent results. Church and community improvements, new services and even new ways of behaving result from such

groups. The deeper meanings are sounded in Elton Trueblood's *Alternative to Futility*. Write to Mr. Shirley E. Greene, Merom, Indiana, for a free mimeographed report and plan of organization for such groups.

How get action out of education?

The recommended plan is to form a "commission" to work on a particular problem, thus combining study, investigation, and discussion with citizen action, publicity and pressure. Every effort should be made to use all available resources both in church and civic organizations, both in current publications and in the Bible. One church commission for a Fair Employment Practices ordinance consulted with racial minority groups and formed a joint commission. A study of legislation in other cities led them to make a first-hand study of local conditions. Forums with local legislators led to revitalized political participation, letters to the newspapers, use of radio time, and a drama in the church school. Not the least important was a re-study of the books of Esther, Jonah and Galatians. Methods of persuasion were used to introduce Negro sales clerks in the local department stores and then to obtain hearty support for such practices. One member of the commission attended the Race Relations Institute at Fisk University and returned with authoritative information. A special institute on the proposed ordinance was conducted for the churches of the city. Inter-racial meetings were held and new friendships developed across racial lines. Such commissions develop a sense of "mission" which produces the maximum of good education in the hot pursuit of action.

What problems rate prior attention?

1. *Resettlement of a D.P. family.* Protestants have not been doing their share of the job. Here is an opportunity for person-to-person relations in the solution of one sore spot in international relations. For specific help write Dr. Henry C. Koch, Evangelical and Reformed World Service, 1720 Chouteau Avenue, St. Louis 3, Missouri; or Mr. Howard Kester, Congregational Christian Service Committee, 110 East 29th St., New York City.

2. *Fair Employment Practices* in local and state legislation. Several states and municipalities have already had successful experiences. Write Mr. Herman Long, Race Relations Division, Fisk University, Nashville, Tenn., for further information and resources.

3. *Housing, slum clearance, migrant camps*, etc. It is likely Congress will authorize an expanded public housing program requiring local initiative and support. For further information write Mr. Thomas Keehn, Legislative office, 1751 "N" St. N. W., Washington 6, D. C.

4. *Labor-management problems*, grievance procedure and strikes. Make the acquaintance of local leadership for discussion of local problems as well as national labor relations legislation. Write to Mr. Francis W. McPeck, 1164 E. 58th St., Chicago 37, Illinois, for material and suggestions.

5. *Family legislation, delinquency and divorce* are close to the interests of any church group. There are important things your group can do to help. It would be well to get in touch with Mr. Huber F. Klemme, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio, for suggestions of how to proceed.

6. *United Nations, Soviet-American tensions, China and the Far East*. If close enough to visit the U. N., write Mr. Herman F. Reissig, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, for arrangements. For a statesmanlike treatment of "China, Communism and Christianity" read the June, 1949, *Social Action* articles by Searle Bates, Charles West and Rowland Gross. Attend institutes of international relations. Participate in American Association for the United Nations and Foreign Policy Association programs. The problems of American foreign policy approach the door of every church and step into the parlor of every home.

What's the pitch? Social action does not follow either a New Deal or a Fair Deal "line." It has no bias for the C.I.O., the C.P., or the D.A.R. Its only bias is for the Christian religion. It starts with Christian assumptions and

seeks to increase human freedoms and meet the urgent need of the masses for security. Justice, freedom and order form the trilogy of Christian values sought for the social order.

Where turn for materials? *Christian Community*, published eight times a year, is sent upon request to all social action chairmen and committee members and, of course, all ministers. Others may have it upon request. Each month it gives one current topic for discussion in the committee, class or organization. It is the program service for social action in the local church. *Labor Letter* is the mimeographed weekly for those especially interested in industrial affairs. *Christian Agriculture* is the monthly mimeographed bulletin for agricultural interests and *Legislative Action Service* is an occasional mimeographed news sheet on national legislation. These are

sent to persons especially interested upon request. *Social Action* is a monthly, forty-page publication, giving competent treatment of current social issues by leading authorities in the field. It is especially designed for individual or group study. Individual subscriptions are \$1.50 for ten issues. Quantity rates for special issues make it exceedingly useful as a resource pamphlet for commissions or study-action groups. Occasional pamphlets by the Federal Council of Churches and the denominational social action agencies are useful for organization and program material. Write the agencies publishing *Christian Community* for these.

What about "eye" appeal? Yes, there is a catalogue of visual slide materials, movies, film strips and records. Especially useful for promotion is *Mr. Harris Joins the Human Race*, a film strip with records. United Nations Posters and other exhibit materials are available from denominational social action agencies. Some local committees keep their church bulletin boards supplied with live materials, pictures and clippings. Others arrange an attractive book and pamphlet table in the church which arrests attention. A new display card, holding two issues of *Social Action* is now available from the Council for Social Action.

Where do I fit in? "The harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few." In the local church, synod, conference, and national Commission or Council, or in the inter-church council in your area, or in the social action work of the women's organization or youth department, or in the religious education program, wherever it touches public life, there is a place for each of us to educate for action. Social action needs and seeks the participation of the total church membership and all church leaders.

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The Reverend Ray Gibbons is Director of the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches. A graduate of Oberlin College and Union Theological Seminary, he was given the degree of Doctor of Divinity by Defiance College last year.

WHERE TO WRITE FOR PUBLICATIONS

Christian Community, 8 issues per year, program service for social action committees: C-C's: Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10; E&R's: Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 W. 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio.

Social Action, ten issues per year, \$1.50, fifteen cents per copy. 289 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.

Christian Agriculture, mimeographed bulletin. Mr. Shirley Greene, Merom, Indiana.

Labor Letter, bi-weekly. Mr. Francis W. McPeck, 1164 E. 58th St., Chicago 37, Illinois.

Legislative Action Service. Mr. Thomas B. Keehn. 1751 "N" St., N. W., Washington 6, D. C.

FOR VISUAL AIDS

Bureau of Audio-Visual Aids (E&R): 1505 Race St., Philadelphia 2, Pa.; 1720 Chouteau Ave., St. Louis 3, Mo.

Missions Council (CC): 287 Fourth Ave., New York 10, N. Y.; 19 S. LaSalle St., Chicago 3, Illinois; 14 Beacon St., Boston 8, Mass.; 3125 W. Adams Boulevard, Los Angeles 16, California.

Social Action Groups At Work

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same basis as others this summer. Behind this news item is an interesting story. Last summer Mrs. Stewart North, a member of the social action committee of the First Congregational Church attended the School for Social Action at Oberlin. With the help of the committee, and sound advice from Mr. North, who is a member of the City Council, the problem of exclusion of Negroes was studied and a strategy developed. After the confidence of leaders in both Negro and white sections of the community had been gained, a young Negro woman who had lived in Billings all her life appeared before the Park Board to request admission of Negroes to the pools. The Board found that no city ordinance or park board regulation could restrict the use of the swimming facilities.

Why had Negroes been excluded for twenty-five years? As Mrs. North puts it, "No one had ever bothered to extend a neck and get the thing corrected." And public reaction? "The only adverse criticism came from a couple of elderly fellows who haven't been swimming for thirty years anyway."

Nor is this all. The Norths are working on resettlement of DPs and a better deal for Indians, as well.

Other spots in the Northwest are alive, too. According to the Reverend Robert A. J. Livingston, the Community Congregational Church, of Fairfield, Montana, has appointed a Christian Social Action Committee. Its first project is a public meeting to discuss "The Need for Organized Community Recreation." Delegates from clubs, churches, and interested groups were invited. Eloquent observation by Pastor Livingston: "There has been quite a bit of talk and feeling on this subject but no one seemed to take the initiative to get it started."

An applause card found its way from Yakima, Washington, where Galen Weaver conducted one of his Race Relations seminars last winter. As a result,

The Church and Conscientious Objectors

Both the Evangelical and Reformed Church and the Congregational Christian churches have through their national bodies expressed themselves as concerned to support the rights of those who on grounds of conscience object to participation in war or military service.

The General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church has declared that the church "extends its fellowship in love to all whose consciences are bound to Christ—to those who for Christ's sake refuse participation in war and to those who heed the call to military service."

The Congregational Christian General Council of 1948, recognizing that there are within the denomination those who would refuse to register as well as those

reports Edward W. Ohrenstein, an interracial committee is being organized to push for a state fair employment practices act.

* * *

According to Reverend J. Sherrill Gohde, pastor of St. Luke's Evangelical and Reformed Church, Independence, Missouri, President Truman's home town was scheduled to be host to the kick-off for the Treasury Department's current bond drive on *Sunday*, May 15. The local ministerial alliance swung into action to remind all and sundry that Sunday is a day of worship in Independence as much as elsewhere. Did your paper report that the gala opening took place in Independence on Monday, May 16th?

* * *

The social action department of the Missouri State Council of Churches, spearheaded by the Reverend John C. Mayne, has been one of the alert groups conducting political education and legislative seminars at the state level. Among the issues in which the department has interested itself are relief for unemployables, appropriations for mental hospitals, equality of educational opportunity in institutions of higher learning, and opposition to the legalizing of horse race betting.

who would refuse military service in any form, resolved . . . "that we reaffirm our historical position on freedom of conscience with respect to military service, and that we re-affirm our desire to keep such conscientious objectors as all others within our fellowship."

Both bodies, furthermore, established procedures for enrolling "C. O's" and for protecting the integrity of conscience. The General Council (CC) empowered its Executive Committee to "take all necessary steps to provide . . . such moral, spiritual, and practical assistance as may be needed." Following this action, a special Committee on Conscientious Objectors was appointed. The General Synod (E. & R.) charged its Commission on Christian Social Action to "continue looking after the problems and needs of conscientious objectors . . . assist them with counsel and support if necessary, and keep the Church informed of their requirements."

Under the present law, objectors to combatant service only are classified as I-A-O and assigned to non-combatant duty. Those objecting to all forms of military service are classified as IV-E and deferred from service.

It is suggested that pastors publicize the position of the church and secure enrollment forms for those members who hold this position. Inquiries and applications for enrollment should be addressed to the Commission on Christian Social Action in the case of the Evangelical and Reformed churches, and, in the case of Congregational Christians, either to the Council for Social Action or to the General Council.

CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

Requests for regular mailings or additional copies for Congregational Christians should be addressed to Council for Social Action, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, New York. Requests by Evangelical and Reformed, and others, as well as news items and communications, should be addressed to the Editor, Huber F. Klemme, Commission on Christian Social Action, 2969 West 25th Street, Cleveland 13, Ohio.